

*The Day She
Was Born*



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The Day She Was Born

By Dan Absalonson

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When I saw him pull the pistol from his right pocket I locked the car door and sat still. When I saw him enter the store where my pregnant wife was grabbing some rainbow chip frosting, I unlocked the car. I knew the small store had no security guard to deter the man, so it was up to me. For a quick second the thought crossed my mind that if I just stayed put, he would go in there, rob the place, and then leave. My wife would be fine. Then I heard shots fired.

I leapt out of the car and started walking towards the store, looking for a weapon. I had nothing in the car, and there wouldn't be time to find one in the store. I stopped before setting off the door sensor and looked over. On either side of the entrance were pale orange pots housing tall leafy plants. I kicked over the one closest to me and watched the dirt spill out onto the pavement. I hoped it was the only thing spilt onto the ground that night. I picked up the pot and shook out the rest of the soil. Weapon in hand I crept towards the store. I peered around painted letters on one of the large front windows. There he was, pointing his gun at the cashier. Everyone else was lying on the floor, but looked OK. He must have shot his gun as a warning to let them know he meant business. I didn't see my wife anywhere. She must be in the back, I thought. The robber looked pretty distracted, so I decided to chance it and hoped he wouldn't notice me sneak in.

I gripped the pot and stepped in front of the doors. I slipped my shoes off to soften my steps as they slid open with all the speed of a snail. As the opening grew wide enough for me I walked through as fast and quiet as I could manage. I made straight for the nearest aisle for cover, never looking over until I was out of his line of site. With my back to a shelf full of potato chips I leaned over to make sure I was clear. I fully expected to come face to face with the barrel of his gun, but he had not seen me. I leaned back in and breathed a deep sigh of relief, but soon my heart was racing again as I thought on what I planned to do next. I stood frozen for a moment, knowing that every second that passed could make the situation more dangerous. I peered down my aisle and saw I was alone.

With huge gliding steps I sailed down its shiny surface until I came to the back of the store. I slid around and continued until I saw his back to me past the end of an aisle. With steps that covered much less ground I strode forward without a sound. The stocked shelves of cereal and soda pop seemed to go on forever. When I reached the end a sudden spike of fear chilled me to the spot. My feet would not obey my command to take another step forward. Then I thought of my pregnant wife, sitting terrified and alone somewhere in the store. I got control of myself again, and took another step forward. As I pushed my feet forward through the swamp of fear I raised one trembling hand high into the air. Small bits of potting soil fell to the floor. The gunman's raised voice masked the tiny explosions they made as they hit the ground between us. Before my nerves could turn me yellow, I flew forward and brought the pot down with everything I had. I wasn't sure what I heard crack, as I smashed the pot onto his skull, but it made me sick. As he fell to an unconscious heap his gun bounced beside him and I scooped it up and shuffled back. I

trained it on him and made some distance between us. I saw him start to move and shouted,

"Stay down!"

He looked over at me and saw that I had his gun. He flinched.

"Alright man, alright."

He lay flat and put his hands behind his head, a position he seemed familiar with. I looked over at the cashier. Her dull eyes held a blank look as she stared down at the robber.

"Hey, call the cops," I said.

She didn't hear me.

"Hey!" I shouted.

Her head shot towards me, but her eyes remained on him for a few seconds longer. When she made eye contact with me I said,

"Call 911, please!"

She snapped out of it and reached for the phone. Once I heard her relaying the story I turned to the crowd of people getting up from the ground. They were all looking at me. I needed to find Sadie.

"Do any of you know how to handle a gun?"

A burly man near me raised his hand.

"I do."

"Can you please take this and keep it on him until the cops get here? I've never used a gun and my wife is somewhere in here."

"Yeah, sure man."

He walked over and gave the man on the floor a hard look as he took the gun from me. He added the weapon to his stare and then looked back at me. His broad thin lipped frown reversed as he said,

"Nice work by the way. I thought you were nuts, but now I see it was for your wife's safety. I'm glad this crackpot didn't get away with this. I'll make sure he doesn't go anywhere, go ahead."

"Thank you so much," I said, and ran off to the back of the store.

"Sadie! Sadie, where are you?"

I heard no reply. I tore down one aisle after another until I heard some groaning in a voice familiar to me.

"Sadie! Are you alright? Have you been shot?"

She was lying on the ground in a pool of red. Was it blood? No. As I looked closer I could see that it was clear liquid showing through the red tiled floor beneath her.

"No, I think my water broke," she said in a tiny voice. She looked up at me.

"Honey, it's time."

"Oh crap!" I said, and began to run off.

"I'm getting you a motorized cart!"

I sprinted to the front of the store, excited to finally have a reason to ride a motorized cart. I hopped on and gunned it back into the store towards my wife. I helped her get on and she steered it after me towards the parking lot.

As we were leaving the store the man with the gun yelled to me,

"Hey man, where are you going? The cops are going to want to talk to you!"

"Sorry, my wife's water broke. We're going to the hospital. Can you tell them to come find me there?"

His eyebrows shot up as he said, "yeah, alright. Go!" and waved his unarmed hand in the direction of the door.

We took his advice and were on the road in a matter of seconds. I drove like a machine down those streets, getting us to the hospital in 4 minutes flat. Yellow meant go, red meant go faster. I called them on the way, and so I was pleased to see a nurse with a wheel chair waiting for us as I squealed the car to a stop. The sound made the nurse jump.

"You know she's going to be alright, you don't have to ruin your tires. We'll take care of her."

"Thank you," I said a bit embarrassed. Then I looked at my wife and gave her a kiss.

"Are you ready?" I said.

"I've been ready," she said with a smile. "Are you kidding me? Get this baby out!"

We shared a laugh.

"OK, I'll park the car and be right in."

We kissed again and then the nurse helped her into the wheel chair and I pulled away to the closest parking spot. I locked the car and jogged back to the hospital.

"My wife was just admitted, her water broke?"

"Yes sir, congratulations."

"Thank you."

"OK, go through those doors, take a right, go down the hall until you find some elevators. Take one to the second floor and ask the station nurse up there, she'll tell you which room your wife is in."

"Thanks!" I said tapping the desk twice and speed walking to the elevators, which took so long to arrive that I almost took the stairs.

"Hello sir, how can I help you?"

"My wife,"

"Ah yes, room 2002." She pointed behind her, just down there."

With another thank you I was on my way.

My wife was in a hospital gown ready to go. I stood by her side holding her hand as the baby came. It was miraculous. In a matter of moments my life was changed forever. I was a daddy. As I held her in my arms my gratitude for her and my wife and the whole world spilled onto my shirt. I can't remember the last time I cried, other than that day. She was born three weeks early at 6 pounds 11 ounces, 18 inches long, but healthy as can be. She never had to visit the NICU. We were lucky.

My wife had been having contractions during the previous week, but had never progressed. We came to find out from the doctor that they helped the baby mature in mommy's tummy. The doc also said that the excitement is probably what made my wife's water break and caused her to go into labor. I was able to hold my daughter for quite a while before some policeman came to our room. They asked if they could buy me a cup of coffee at the cafeteria and get my account of what happened. I turned to my wife to ask her if she was OK with that, but she and the baby were already asleep. My daughter lay on her chest, her legs tucked under her like a frog. They both looked so peaceful that I didn't want to wake them so I motioned that we go out into the hall.

We walked to the cafeteria and I relayed my whole story as I sipped coffee. Every time I gave them new information, the cop name Sam wrote in his notepad and his lower lip disappeared under his bushy mustache as he looked down to jot his notes. I wasn't in trouble, they considered me a hero.

"You're a brave man," Sam said as I finished.

"Not usually, but thank you."

"Well I guess we'll do just about anything for those we love."

"Yes sir," I said.

They both stood, shook my hand, gave me their business cards, and left. I sat there for another minute looking out the cafeteria window finishing the last of my coffee. As I watched cars pass by on the street below I wondered at what a day it had been. The day she was born.

THE END

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